

Child and Family Services Update

March 17, 2003

Commissioner's Award

By Patti Van Wagoner and Mary Steck

It's not often that we get to boast of the great leadership we have at Child and Family Services! However, this April, during the 14th National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect in St. Louis, we will be able to do just that. Richard J. Anderson has been selected to receive a 2003 Commissioner's Award from the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families. This award is given to individuals who have made significant contributions to the prevention of child abuse and neglect and have inspired others to join in this important effort.

Those of us who have worked closely with Richard recognize the dedication and determination he invests in supporting the work of each employee within Child and Family Services. He understands the importance of child welfare work and deeply values our staff who work daily with Utah's communities and families to keep children safe from harm. Richard's influence on our current practice has helped us achieve better outcomes for children and families. He brings nearly 30 years' experience to his work. He gathered together the "Practice Model Development Team," and helped move forward the development of the Practice Model, which, in turn, has contributed to helping us all develop new and better ways of working with children and families. He has, in his own quiet way, fought bravely for better understanding, and achieving better outcomes for children and families, with the legislature, the press, the courts, community partners, other divisions, and the public, and has done much to help create that trust that leads to stronger, better partnerships.

He has led Child and Family Services through several budget crises to workable (although not easy) solutions, and has taught, through example, that through listening, understanding, and working together, we can find better ways to solve problems. Richard's style of leadership is based on building trusting relationships with open communication and creating an atmosphere that encourages teamwork. He proficiently uses the Practice Model skills of engaging, teaming, assessing, planning, and intervening, as he leads Child and Family Services in a direction that is positive and solution-focused, and one that builds upon people's strengths.

We are extremely lucky to have a director who truly cares about us and the children and families we serve, who takes every opportunity to share with our caseworkers how important they are to the organization. Richard has great confidence and faith in people. His identification with and support for the workers and supervisors on the frontline working with families is demonstrated every day in the messages he shares within the organization and with others who impact the organization. He looks for and willingly accepts opportunities to educate, engage, learn from, and team with community leaders to build a better understanding of child welfare. He is becoming known nationwide as someone who is leading the way in building a Child Welfare System of Care that engages our partners, both private sector and public agencies,

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families, and employees in recognizing that each is a critical part in the “system of care,” and that only by working together can we achieve the outcomes we truly seek for Utah’s children.

We are grateful for Richard’s great attitude, and feel strongly that he is the right man in the right place at the right time, and we thank him for the 210% of himself he puts into a most difficult and demanding job every single day. We hope you join with us in taking this opportunity to thank him for all he does for us. We express our congratulations to Richard on this award, and are delighted he is receiving this recognition he well deserves as our leader, our friend, our helper, and our supporter, as well as (just incidentally, of course) a leader in the field of child welfare.